

LIGHT BEARERS MINISTRY

MISSION

UPDATE

August 2003

CONVOCATION MESSAGES ON TAPE

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CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE JUDGMENT

by James Rafferty

A few years ago, a young man and his girlfriend visited my office. Both were Christians but from different denominational backgrounds and they had questions about the idea of a judgment—specifically, an “investigative judgment.” The young lady had strong reservations about the validity of this doctrine in relation to the gospel and assurance in Christ. I could hardly blame her.

At first glance the Biblical teaching of a judgment for those who profess faith in Jesus as Savior may seem to be out of place in a gospel setting. But the Bible teaches that the judgment is a crucial component of the gospel: “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17, NKJV).

Certainly, the judgment is a solemn event, yet we can see from this verse that the issue in the judgment is the gospel. And the gospel is a message of glad tidings. It is the good news of salvation given by God in the gift of Jesus Christ to the entire world. Jesus is the Savior of all (see 1 Timothy 4:10). He has ransomed the human race (see 1 Timothy 2:6). The

gospel calls every individual to respond to that gift, since all have been impacted by it, experiencing life because of it (see Acts 17:28). All are included in the judgment at one point or another, for the judgment in its simplest form is our response to the gospel (see John 3:16-21).

In other words, the judgment is not so much what *God* decides as it is what *we* decide. The judgment is simply a revelation of our decision to accept or reject the Lamb slain for our sins. This is one reason why Jesus said that for “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37).

Therefore, according to wise King Solomon, God will “bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Our words and our works testify to the decision we have made concerning the Savior of the world. What have we done with the Lamb slain for our sins? If we have accepted Him, or even responded to His beckoning voice, it will show in our lives, in love to God and our fellow man.

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JUDGING OTHERS

For example, if we love people for whom Christ died, which would include all people, we will refrain from judging them. This is one of the most insidious sins of humanity. Yet, the Bible teaches that we cannot judge one another because we cannot read the heart—only God can. This is why judgment is His alone.

“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way” (Romans 14:10-13, NKJV).

The gospel message is to *stop judging one another!* That is also the message of the judgment. God has a record of all good and evil. He is infinite in mercy and, at the same time, He will by no means clear those who have not availed themselves of His mercy (see Exodus 33:5-7; Galatians 6:7-8). Leave every soul in the hands of Jesus. He died for us. He is our Savior. He bore our sins, paying that terrible price in our place. Rather than judging others, focus on removing any stumbling blocks that might cause your neighbor to fall. You may be all that some people see of God, so don’t allow a judgmental attitude to spring up in your heart that could cause them to reject the gospel of God’s non-condemning love.

SALVATION BY WORKS

Another reason there is a judgment for professed believers is honesty, or dishonesty. Jesus said that many people who claim to call Him Lord are only religious-sounding acquaintances; they do not really know Him as Savior and Friend:

“Not every one that saith unto Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity’” (Matthew 7:21-23).

Many who profess faith in Christ are just that—only professors. They do not know the Lamb. He does not know them. They may take His name, calling themselves Christians, and even do wonderful works. Yet they are workers of iniquity, violators of God’s law of love. These people offer their works rather than the righteousness of Jesus as a reason they should be saved. The bottom line is firm: when we stand in the judgment, we will not be saved by our works. Yes, works reveal our love for Christ, but if we rely on them as the means of salvation, we will be sadly disappointed.

SILENCING THE ACCUSER

Probably the most important reason for the judgment is the silencing of Satan, the accuser. The book of Revelation points out that the entire human race has an accuser:

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night’” (Revelation 12:10).

The devil is defiantly opposing the salvation of every soul for whom Christ died. His full-time occupation, by day and by night, is to hurl railing accusations against

God's ransomed people. Here is another look at the work of this adversary:

"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him" (Zechariah 3:1).

Satan leads us into sin and then points to our failures as a reason we should be excluded from God's love. He makes his case that none deserve to be saved or even protected from the consequences of sin. And he has a point: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). Yet, unworthy and unrighteous as we are, we have One who speaks in our defense:

"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1, NIV).

Note this point with care. Christ speaks to the Father in our defense not because the Father is against us and Christ is for us. *Satan* is the accuser of the brethren, not God. The *devil* is bent on our destruction; God is solely focused on our salvation. "For," said Jesus, "the Father Himself loveth you" (John 16:27).

SATAN THE ACCUSER, NOT GOD

Now back to the reason for the judgment. What do the accusations of Satan have to do with the judgment? Everything! Rebellion and sin began in heaven (see Revelation 12:7-9). It began with Lucifer (Satan), once an anointed, covering cherub (see Ezekiel 28:12-19; Isaiah 14:12-14). This war against God began as Lucifer "traded" his purity for iniquity and "sinned" against God (Ezekiel 28:16, 18). The only recourse of this fallen angel was to charge that obedience to God's commandments was a standard that could not be kept. Therefore, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, Satan exulted. Their failure had validated his insinuations. God then had to decide between two choices:

1. allow justice to be visited upon man for breaking His commandments; or
2. forget about His commandments and His justice and allow sin to forever reap ruin in His universe.

God chose the first, but immediately He implemented the eternal plan of redemption, sending His only Son, in human form, to be the receiver of that justice.

"God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He

Christ speaks to the Father in our defense not because the Father is against us and Christ is for us....

"For," said Jesus, "the Father Himself loveth you" (John 16:27).

did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26, NIV).

Calvary is the eternal record that God is both just and merciful. In mercy "He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished." In justice He gave Christ as a sacrifice for our sins. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!

In giving His Son to pay the price for all sin, God has clearly demonstrated that He is just, as well as merciful. Sin could not go unpunished, therefore, God took that punishment, in the person of Christ. Jesus demonstrated on the cross of Calvary both God's justice and His mercy. In the words of the Psalmist:

"Mercy and truth have met together;

righteousness and peace have kissed” (Psalm 85:10, NKJV).

In this hour of judgment, we are called to make a choice between three options:

1) We can judge others in an effort to justify ourselves by comparing our lives to theirs in order to feel that we are OK.

2) We can rely upon our good works, deceiving ourselves that we will be saved by what we do for God in spite of the fact that our lives are overflowing with sin.

3) We can trust in Christ who has cast out Satan, our accuser, by the merits of His life and death.

God longs to give us the assurance of His salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ. His heart yearns over us each moment of the day, tenderly drawing us to place our full confidence in Him.

Ultimately, the judgment taught in the Bible points all to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, sanctification and redemption (see 1 Corinthians 1:30-31). We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us by our good works or by judging others as being worse than we are. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but upon His own. Let His righteousness be yours by faith. Amen.



Events Schedule

- ◆ **July 31–August 10**
SDA Camp Meeting, Greece
Ty Gibson–lackey@otenet.gr
- ◆ **August 8-9**
Brazilian SDA Church, Arlington, TX
Herb Montgomery–[\(972\)670-9027](tel:(972)670-9027)
- ◆ **August 20-24**
Ooltewah SDA Church, TN
James Rafferty–[\(423\)238-4619](tel:(423)238-4619)
- ◆ **August 22-23**
Benton SDA Church, TN
Ty Gibson–[\(423\)472-8842](tel:(423)472-8842)
- ◆ **September 5-6**
Yuma SDA Church, AZ
Herb Montgomery–[\(928\)783-3088](tel:(928)783-3088)
- ◆ **September 5-7**
Brooklawn SDA Church, CT
James Rafferty–[\(203\)795-0607](tel:(203)795-0607)
- ◆ **September 12-13**
Braintree SDA Church, MA
James Rafferty–[\(978\)440-7838](tel:(978)440-7838)
- ◆ **September 19-20**
Garden City SDA Church, KS
Ty Gibson–[\(620\)335-5234](tel:(620)335-5234)
- ◆ **September 19-20**
Andrews SDA Church, KY
James Rafferty–[\(828\)321-4057](tel:(828)321-4057)
- ◆ **October 3-5**
Greater Boston Academy Alumni, MA
Ty Gibson–[\(781\)438-4253](tel:(781)438-4253)
- ◆ **October 3-4**
Andrews SDA Church, KY
James Rafferty–[\(828\)321-4057](tel:(828)321-4057)
- ◆ **October 6-10**
Greater Boston Academy Week of Prayer, MA
Ty Gibson–[\(781\)438-4253](tel:(781)438-4253)
- ◆ **October 8-11**
Jackson Heights SDA Church, Queens, NY
James Rafferty–[\(718\)639-0464](tel:(718)639-0464)

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Lift Him Up

3ABN Schedule
(GE- 4 Satellite;
Sky Angel Channel 9710)

Tuesday	4:30 p.m. (PST)
	10:30 p.m. (PST)
Thursday	11:00 a.m. (PST)
Saturday	10:30 a.m. (PST)

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PO Box 1888 • Malo, WA 99150 • USA
Phone: (509)779-4444 or (509)779-4795 • Fax: (509)779-4140
E-mail: lbm@starband.net • www.LightBearers.org

Light Bearers is a non-profit ministry based in the beautiful northeastern mountains of Washington State. Our purpose is to help proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ through the spoken and published word.